

asked Washington to repeal these onerous Medicaid mandates. We have introduced legislation—the State Flexibility Act, as the Senator mentioned—to do exactly what the Governors have asked.

The State Flexibility Act fully repeals these burdensome Medicaid MOE regulations. It starts to put States back in control to balance their budgets while simultaneously lowering Federal entitlement spending. Our legislation will save taxpayers \$2.8 billion over just the first 5 years. That is a lot of money.

Regardless of political affiliation, I am confident this bill has the potential to garner strong, bipartisan support in Congress, and it represents a strong first step toward achieving comprehensive Medicaid reform. Any Senator who has talked to his or her State's Governor knows we need to pass this legislation to enable States to survive the current fiscal crisis and to better care for the most vulnerable Medicaid beneficiaries in their respective States.

It is time for Congress to roll back these unreasonable MOE mandates and put the States, not Washington, back in charge.

I personally thank the Senator, my colleague from Wyoming, Mr. BARRASSO, for working with us on this legislation. Without him here, I don't think we would be able to do anywhere near as much as we are doing. The Senator, in particular, brings a unique perspective to the debate over MOE requirements, and I don't know of any Senator who is serving his State any better than he.

I would appreciate hearing more of the Senator's thoughts on this matter because he has the experience, and he has operated on countless people, and he has done it whether they have been Medicaid beneficiaries, people who have insurance, or people who have nothing. I know that. I have great admiration for the Senator from Wyoming. These States have been heavily burdened with MOE requirements, which are bureaucratic unnecessary. I would like to hear from the Senator how important that is.

Mr. BARRASSO. I appreciate the comments of my colleague. I have taken care of Medicaid patients over the years, and I know this is a program that is burdensome. I also served in the State legislature, and I know the mandates coming out of Washington make it harder for the people back home to take care of patients and harder for our State legislatures to deal with helping people on Medicaid, making it more difficult for physicians to take care of those patients, and making it more expensive. There is a lot of waste in the mandate.

When Senator HATCH talked about the comments from his Governor, I have comments from ours as well, Governor Matt Mead, who has been in office only just since January. He wrote and was one of the 33 Governors who signed a letter to President Obama say-

ing that the costs of maintaining their Medicaid Programs are fast becoming a serious threat to the State's general funds.

We live in a State where we have to balance the budget every year. He went on to say that Wyoming needs to have flexibility, which is the key word and the title of the bill introduced by Senator HATCH, S. 868, the State Flexibility Act.

That is what Governors are asking for, flexibility, because with that flexibility they can do better for the patients, and they can do it cheaper. Wyoming needs the flexibility at the State level to ensure that the Medicaid Program is operated efficiently and effectively.

People do not believe they are getting efficiency and effectiveness out of Washington these days. They do not think they are getting value for their money. I agree with the American people. I have heard them loudly and clearly. I said it when I was practicing medicine and I say it as a Member of the Senate.

Our Governor goes on: Wyoming strongly supports the removal of these maintenance of effort requirements. This is why I come to the Senate floor every week to talk about this health care law, the implications of it, the impact on the people of this great country, and why I think this health care law is one that is ultimately bad for patients, bad for providers, the nurses and the doctors who take care of those patients, and also bad for the American taxpayers. At a time when we are borrowing 41 cents for every \$1 we spend in this country, we cannot afford to continue to waste money.

Our problem in this country is not that we are taxed too little, it is that we spend too much and do not spend it well. We have to begin focusing differently, and one of the ways we can do it—my understanding from looking at this is actually the Congressional Budget Office, which does the scoring on legislation, scored Senator HATCH's State Flexibility Act as actually saving, I think, \$2.8 billion total over 5 years.

Mr. HATCH. Right.

Mr. BARRASSO. Isn't that what we are trying to do: save money, help people, do it more efficiently, more effectively? That is why I am proud to cosponsor with my friend, Senator HATCH, the State Flexibility Act.

Mr. HATCH. And give the States flexibility to do what they can do better than the Federal Government. As a former medical liability defense lawyer back in my early days, I represented doctors, health care providers, nurses, and hospitals in defending them from what were, in most cases, frivolous suits that run up the cost of medicine.

I cannot tell you what it means to me to have Senator BARRASSO in the Senate with all the medical experience he has had. Frankly, the States can do the job, but they cannot do it within budget if we keep piling regulation and

onerous burdens on them, such as the partisan health care bill does.

Frankly, I want the Senator from Wyoming to know I feel it is an honor to serve with him and an honor to have a couple of medical doctors on our side. Dr. BARRASSO and Dr. COBURN are both excellent doctors. They have lived through these problems. They know what they are like. They do not have to have anybody tell them what is wrong with the approaches we are taking. They know what is wrong.

Frankly, I thank the Senator from Wyoming for being willing to serve here.

Mr. BARRASSO. I appreciate the kindness and I appreciate the fact that Senator HATCH is allowing me to work with him. He has a long and illustrious career of leadership in the Senate, and he has been a champion over the years of the fact that States are better than Washington to make decisions because what works in one State may not work in another State. If we give States the flexibility, ultimately they will do it better. They are the laboratories of democracy. That is why we believe in limited government and making decisions at the local level as close to home as possible, which is why I know so many Governors across the country support the State Flexibility Act. I am hoping we get a successful vote in the Senate on it because whenever Washington makes a one-size-fits-all decision, it hardly ever works for most folks back home.

Mr. HATCH. That is right. I believe this will have great bipartisan support among the Governors and hopefully in this body. I thank Senator BARRASSO for bringing this to our attention.

Mr. BARRASSO. I thank Senator HATCH.

Madam President, I will tell you, I still believe this is a law that is bad for patients, it is bad for health care providers of this country, the nurses and doctors who take care of them, bad for taxpayers. I will be back at home in Wyoming over the weekend visiting with patients, as well as providers, as well as taxpayers, listening to what they have to say. I know the people of Wyoming have great concerns about this health care law and would like the kind of flexibility that is described in S. 868, the State Flexibility Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi is recognized.

Mr. COCHRAN. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. COCHRAN pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 170 are located in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. COCHRAN. I yield the floor.

COMMENDING CONGRESSMAN PETER WELCH

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like share the good work being done by my friend and colleague in the House of Representatives, Congressman PETER WELCH.

As Democrats and Republicans continue their discussions, I am proud that PETER is bringing a Vermont perspective and Vermont values to the debate. He understands the dangers the United States faces if we default on our debt, but the burden of addressing our mounting national debt must be shared fairly. Budgets are a reflection of our national priorities, and we simply cannot balance our budget on the backs of the most vulnerable alone.

I applaud PETER for bringing his reasoned and responsible message to the debate. I ask unanimous consent that an article on Congressman WELCH from today's *The Hill* be printed in the *RECORD*.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the *RECORD*, as follows:

REP. WELCH: PARTISAN DIVISION BEGS CLEAN
VOTE TO RAISE NATION'S DEBT CEILING
(By Mike Lillis)

Lawmakers seeking a bipartisan deficit-reduction plan to accompany the looming debt-ceiling vote are deluding themselves about the efficiency of Congress, according to the Democrat spearheading the push for a clean debt-limit bill.

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), who has emerged in recent weeks as the staunchest proponent of a standalone debt-ceiling hike, said the parties are simply too far apart ideologically to reach a budget deal in time to avoid the market turmoil many fear would attend inaction on the debt limit.

In a sit-down interview with *The Hill* from his fourth-floor Longworth office, Welch noted the recent fight over 2011 spending took the country to the very brink of a government shutdown.

The battle over the long-term budget will be even tougher to resolve, he warned, and thus should be tackled separately from the must-pass debt-limit hike.

"If the leadership thinks it can make progress on some steps that would move us toward a better long-term sustainable budget—fine," Welch said Monday. "But if any of us are candid—and we saw how just the simple question of trying to keep the lights on in the government brought us to the midnight hour—do we realistically think that the gap between the [Democrats'] approach on the budget and the [Republicans'] approach on the budget can be bridged in that period of time?"

Congress's systemic dysfunction was on display last month, Welch charged, when Standard & Poor's revised its U.S. debt-rating outlook from "neutral" to "negative." That move was largely influenced not by fiscal considerations, he noted, but by "a lack of confidence in Congress and its ability to make the compromises that are required to get from here to there."

With that in mind, Welch last month spearheaded a letter urging Democratic leaders to unite behind a clean debt-limit bill. It was endorsed by 114 Democrats. The potential economic fallout of flirting with default, he warned, is too serious to saddle the debt-ceiling vote with politically charged budget conditions.

"This is not a matter of ripping up the credit card; this is a matter of paying off the credit card," Welch said. "And if you don't allow us to do that . . . we're basically saying we're going to stiff our creditors."

For almost a century, Congress has set a cap on the nation's debt, allowing the government to issue bonds to fund its deficit spending—up to a certain level.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has projected the government will surpass the current \$14.3 trillion ceiling on May 16. Recognizing the improbability that Congress will act before then, Geithner on Monday told lawmakers he can take "extraordinary measures" to stave off default for several more months. He set the new deadline at Aug. 2.

All sides of the debate agree that Congress will ultimately raise the debt ceiling. The question remains how it will do that.

Republican leaders have insisted that the debt-limit vote be coupled with a strategy for bringing down deficits over the long haul—a sentiment shared by a growing number of Senate Democrats.

"The vehicle upon which something is likely to be achieved to reduce government spending is the debt ceiling," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) told reporters Tuesday. "I don't intend to vote to raise the debt ceiling unless we do something significant about the debt."

In the House, Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) suggested Tuesday that Republicans might stage a vote on a clean debt-ceiling bill just to prove it can't pass—a strategy Welch blasted as a "political stunt."

Rep. John Larson (Conn.), chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, said this week that Democrats are "amenable" to strategies that couple the debt-ceiling vote with a long-term deficit-reduction plan—with a major caveat.

"They just have to be consistent with not touching Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and dismantling the social compact between the American people and [their] government," Larson told *The Hill* on Tuesday.

Therein lies the trouble, as GOP leaders are eyeing cuts to all of those programs as part of their deficit-reduction plans.

Leaders from both parties, representing both chambers, will meet Thursday with Vice President Biden in the first official attempt to reach a long-term budget agreement.

Welch, a chief deputy whip, doesn't have much faith in a quick resolution.

"The more the clock ticks, the more apprehension you'll start to see in the markets," he warned. "When this happens, it could happen very quickly—and with devastating consequences."

It's not the first time Welch has emerged on the national stage amid a thorny budget debate. In December, he was among the fiercest opponents of the agreement between Obama and McConnell to extend the George W. Bush-era tax cuts through 2012, even for the wealthiest Americans.

This week, he tempered that criticism with a bit of pragmatism.

"It was not a great deal, but it was the best deal [we could get]," he said. "My criticism also acknowledges that the president had his reasons, and we in the House—the Democrats—didn't have the votes."

Welch was also highly critical of the cuts to low-income energy subsidies contained in Obama's 2012 budget proposal—cuts Welch said would "literally freeze" his constituents who rely on them to pay their heating bills.

"A lot of us understood that the president was making a statement," Welch said Monday of that critique. "I respected what motivated the president."

In some sense, Welch's rise to prominence is as improbable as passage of the clean debt-ceiling hike he's lobbying. The third-term liberal is a relative newcomer to Capitol Hill. And the Vermont he represents hardly shares the national political reputation that characterizes many of its New England neighbors.

Yet lawmakers on both sides of the aisle say Welch's emergence is no accident. Rep.

Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.), a Blue Dog leader who shares a Capitol Hill apartment with the liberal Welch, said his roommate studies hard and uses his experience as a state legislator to great advantage in Washington.

"Peter is a nerd, just like me," Cooper said in an e-mail. "He actually takes the time to read legislation and understand the issues, which has become a rarity in Washington. Coming from state government, where you need to balance the budget every year, he understands the importance of paying for legislation. This has made him a key consensus builder in the House and one of the strongest advocates of fiscal responsibility in the Progressive Caucus."

Rep. Peter Roskam (Ill.), the Republican chief deputy whip, called Welch "a happy warrior"—the rare legislator who "firmly believes in a set of principles" but is also quick to engage the other side.

"When the country looks at Washington, they feel like members are just talking past each other," Roskam told *The Hill* this week. Welch, on the other hand, "is very engaging."

The bookshelf in Welch's office tells a similar story. It holds volumes by Nancy Pelosi as well as T. Boone Pickens; it boasts the 9/11 Commission Report but also a collection of poems by Rumi, a 13th-century Persian poet and mystic.

Welch is also one of the few Democrats willing to go face to face with Sean Hannity, the conservative—and characteristically combative—Fox News pundit.

Welch conceded Monday that he "got the Democratic treatment" during his recent Hannity appearance. But only by reaching across the aisle, he said, will lawmakers in Washington ever be truly effective.

"A lot of us get in arguments as though it's an ideological battle to be won, rather than a practical problem to be solved. . . . That doesn't work for the country," he said. "I hope that we all can take a step back—all of us—and see that there's real advantage to us trying to work together."

HONORING THE MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITIES

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I was pleased to join Senate Majority Leader REID and Republican Leader McCONNELL in offering the strongest possible support for the Senate resolution honoring our heroic military and intelligence communities responsible for carrying out the mission that resulted in the death of one of the most reviled murderers and nefarious menaces of our time—Osama bin Laden.

As a senior member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, I cannot begin to commend our Armed Forces and intelligence professionals enough for their absolutely exceptional and flawless heroism in conducting the most perilous and consequential of operations. With the highest level of perseverance, professionalism, service, and sacrifice conceivable, our bravest and finest joined forces and brought the day of reckoning and justice that long awaited this wretched terrorist.

This landmark event is indeed a significant stride in the war on terrorism. Since 9/11, the efforts of our tireless and dedicated Armed Forces and intelligence operators have sought to keep our homeland safe and make the world more secure. On May 1, 2011, these efforts culminated in the death of one of